

# Major Moves Help Desk

## Office of Governor Mitch Daniels

### Brian Howey: An open letter to my Hoosier Democratic friends

INDIANAPOLIS — This column is for my Democratic friends out there, scattered across the small towns and cities of Indiana. We've partied together on the veranda at French Lick. We've conspired together at the Chatterbox Tavern. We've had laughs and arguments. You run my columns in your family-owned newspapers. We share humor, insights, occasional exasperation and gall. We have common bonds: striving to make our societies better, more just, watching out for the less fortunate, and ... the working men and women.

I have to tell you, I have never seen your party's public servants in the Indiana legislature more self-serving and partisan. In the Indiana House, not one single vote for Major Moves, the \$3.8 billion transportation plan that could set the stage for generations of growth here in the "Crossroads of America."

Many of us have come to believe that putting the best roads in America's crossroads will help us attract logistic, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, warehousing, and transportation jobs to Indiana. This is our Indiana, the one that bled more than 100,000 jobs thus far in the new century. We lost another Congressional seat. Our corporate headquarters were vanishing in a rapidly accelerated global economy. We won't be competing five years from now with just Iowans ... it will be Malaysians, Chinese and Indians. In fact, we already are.

But it's not just Mitch. Not one Rooster vote in the House for the Major Moves plan endorsed by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Indiana-Kentucky Council of Carpenters and Millrights, the corn growers, the coal council, the bricklayers, the packers, the Asphalt Paver Association, the Chamber, the Realtors, Hoosier

Voices for I-69, the U.S. 31 Coalition, Indiana Association of Cities and Towns, Northwestern Indiana Building & Construction Trades Council, their brothers in the St. Joe Valley, the sheet metal workers, the Teamsters. The list goes on and on. Sorry if I missed some of you folks.

And here's why.

House Minority Leader B. Patrick Bauer wants to be Speaker again. So the caucus sticks together, no matter what. They are more interested in 51 or 52 jobs (for themselves, in the legislature), than the tens of thousands of jobs that your union brothers and sisters are seeking. Building I-69 to Evansville; for get about it. The Democrats also fear that if Gov. Daniels succeeds, there will be corresponding waves of jobs, better roads, more political support, more ability to raise money.

The Democrats say they need more time. Gov. Daniels initiated this issue last September and Bauer denounced it from the get-go (the rest of us had to study it a bit). It was five months before legislative Democrats offered any kind of organized response. When they did, they proposed more bonding, more gasoline taxes, more debt, more waiting (how long have we been waiting for I-69 and the U.S. 31 Kokomo bypass?) as opposed to setting the table for the next couple Hoosier generations with \$3.8 billion earning interest on a lease for the money-losing Indiana Toll Road. They point out that Gov. Daniels poll numbers are low. Following this logic, Ronald Reagan would never have been re-elected in 1984 (after those controversial tax cuts that ignited two decades of unprecedented economic expansion).

But here's the most galling thing about the House Democrats. They have a number of other

issues that they could have used to beat the pants off Republicans next November. The Daylight saving time issue. The 2005 budget. School funding. Property taxes. If played right, any one of these could be enough to pick off two or three Republicans to put them back in power. The national environment favors them. President Bush's approval is at 34 percent, Vice President Cheney is at 18 percent. Conservative columnist William F. Buckley has called on Bush to recognize and communicate that we've "failed" in Iraq (a future column).

Instead of doing what's right, they are protecting themselves and preparing to refeather their nests (Bauer will not deny his intention of bringing back lifetime health care for legislators and their ex-spouses). They provoke hysteria over "fer-ners" coming into America (Spain and Australia, by the way, are valued War on Terror allies).

I've never seen anything like it.

Only one Democrat in the entire legislature, Sen. Glenn Howard of Indianapolis, is supporting the plan, explaining, "I'm sick and tired of sending young men and young women to jail without jobs. Aren't we tired of paying for prisons? Get the men and women jobs and we won't have that problem."

Anyway, I just had to share this with you all. Perhaps the wise among you, the probing thinkers, can bring to Indiana Democrats something so utterly lacking now: credible ideas, based on time-tested ideals (remember that "only thing we have to fear is ... fear itself" thingy?), an alternative vision that goes beyond the power lust and wallets of your party's wayward souls in the Indiana General Assembly.

*Howey is publisher of The Howey Political Report, the weekly briefing on Indiana politics. See [www.howeypolitics.com](http://www.howeypolitics.com).*

#### Major Moves Supporters

**Dozens of groups, businesses, and elected officials support Major Moves.**

**Add your name on the list.**

**Contact:**  
**[anorris@gov.in.gov](mailto:anorris@gov.in.gov)**

**Learn More about Major Moves**

**[www.majormoves.in.gov](http://www.majormoves.in.gov)**

#### Bonding takes 650 Years to Repay

In 1952, The State of Indiana took out a \$280 million bond to build the Indiana Toll Road.

That debt has been re-bonded many times over the years, but Indiana still owes about \$200 million on those bonds.

**The Democrat Plan takes out over \$1 billion in loans.**

Assuming Indiana would continue re-bonding and repaying these loans as it has over the last 50+ years, the State would pay down this debt at a rate of approximately \$1.5 million a year.

**It would take the state over 650 years to repay the Democrats' debt.**

Major Moves involves no new debt and actually reduces debt by \$200 million.

### Indy Star: Let's Take Chance on Major Moves

**Our position: Toll Road lease offers Indiana a chance to create jobs, improve infrastructure and strengthen its economy.**

If someone could devise a risk-free, painless plan to significantly upgrade Indiana's infrastructure and create thousands of jobs, we'd be all for it.

But let's talk about reality.

Because in the real world rewards come to those who accept reasonable risk. Businesses that don't invest in necessary equipment, create new products or recruit talented workers won't prosper. Sports teams that aren't aggressive on offense or defense won't win. Individuals who always play it safe at school or work won't succeed.

The principle also applies to government, and in this instance to Gov. Mitch Daniels' proposal to lease the Indiana Toll Road to a private consortium in exchange for \$3.85 billion in cash and more than \$4 billion in promised maintenance.

Does a 75-year lease carry some risk to the state? Yes, but safeguards built into the deal make it altogether reasonable. Would it have been ideal to have Indiana-based or U.S.-based companies operating the Toll Road? Sure, but those bids either didn't materialize or couldn't compete with the winning offer. Isn't there a better alternative? Perhaps, but none offered so far comes close to providing as much value as the deal on the table. And waiting in hope that something better will materialize is a losing proposition.

The Senate on Thursday, in a close vote, approved legislation giving the governor the authority to sign the Toll Road lease. The bill, which also had narrowly passed the House, will now go to conference committee.

Legislators have 11 days before the session ends to complete work on the Major Moves initiative. And although a special session would be justified if compromises cannot be reached by March 14, there's no good reason not to meet the deadline for approving the bill.

Three years ago, business, academic and political leaders from around the state began seriously discussing the plight of Indiana's economy. Jobs were disappearing by the thousands. Hoosiers' incomes weren't keeping pace with what workers in other states were earning. Investment capital was scarce.

What could be done to turn around the state's economy? The consensus among key leaders was to aggressively pursue growing sectors of industry, including distribution and logistics. To throw off "this is the way we've always done it" and "it's good enough" mind-sets. To embrace necessary change. To accept reasonable risk.

In short, to champion all of the values now embodied in the Toll Road lease.

The plan will require changes in the way things are done now. It, like every other initiative, doesn't come without risk. Failure to seize this opportunity, however, would be far more hazardous to the state's future place in the global economy.

